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**To: ConnectME Authority**  
**Phil Lindley, Executive Director ConnectME**

**RE: Pre-Application Letter – 7<sup>th</sup> Round Grant**

**Project: No DSL Subscriber Left Behind Project**  
**Southern Aroostook County, ME**

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In response to the Authority's announcement of its Seventh Grant Round, Pioneer Wireless, Inc., dba Pioneer Broadband, ("Pioneer, PBB") is pleased to submit this Pre-Application letter for our "No DSL Subscriber Left Behind" Project.

Pioneer has been deploying DSL service in the southern Aroostook area for several years. Two major problems involved in the deployment, are the needs to remove "Load Coils" and "Bridge Taps" from the ILEC's wire loops that serve rural residences. Load coils were/are used by the Telco's to extend the serviceable distance that a phone line could reach, (normally 18,000 feet). Bridge Taps were used to share one loop to several customers, i.e., "party lines".

Load Coils and Bridge Taps are significantly *rural problem* and can cost *upwards of \$1000* to have these impediments removed to make the loop suitable for DSL service. However, the customers we seek to assist *are indeed* within range of our DSL equipment, so if the capital cost of removal can be overcome, we can gain the customers. These unserved customers are not "off-the-grid." *Furthermore, the removal of load coils and bridge taps must be done by the ILEC*, these removals are not a service that Pioneer can provide.

1. Pioneer is proposing to use this project fund to address these special installations, for rural, unserved customers in Southern Aroostook County. At this time the list includes 50 such households and continues to grow. Pioneer will be accountable to the ConnectME Authority through normal accounting methods, since we will have ILEC billing, PBB labor costs and special equipment cost to match with each removal. Pioneer has tried to market the possibility that the potential customer(s) could foot the bill for the load coil removal, but for all (thus far) it has been unaffordable.

2. Our knowledge of this area is extensive. We have communicated with other service providers (FairPoint and Polaris Cable) in the region and there is no evidence that they have plans to expand into these rural areas. As a general rule, Pioneer has exhausted all other possibilities (wireless, cable and other competition) before arriving at this "last option" for these truly *unserved* customers.

3. The DSL equipment to serve these customers is already in place. The standard offer for broadband speed will be at the Tier 5 level, delivered to each customer using ADSL2+ protocol. Customer installations can begin immediately once funds are approved.

4. Current estimated project cost is \$50,000. PBB is requesting funding for \$25,000 representing 50% of the estimated project cost.

5. PBB will fund \$25,000, or 50% of the estimated project cost. Appropriate documentation and evidence of funding availability will be provided in the formal application in a form acceptable to the Authority.

6. There are 50 currently customers that could be served within reach of our project sites. There are few businesses.

7. We are working with the area businesses and local groups in gathering support of this project. Evidence of partnerships and statements of support are being acquired and will be included within the formal application.

8. PBB serves in 55 Maine towns from 80 locations, broadcasting over 5000 square miles, and serving over 5000 customers via fiberoptic cable, wireless, cable, DSL, dialup. PBB has a proven track record of successful expansion activities and deep commitment to serving rural Maine. Pioneer has been the recipient of past grant funding from the ConnectME Authority as well.

We look forward to formal application availability and working with the Authority to bridge the digital divide for the residents and businesses of this area.

Respectfully submitted,

Don Flewelling

